

**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICE  
DOI-BLM-CA-C069-2013-0018-EA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Orphaned Hotchkiss Lease Reclamation**

**BACKGROUND**

The Hotchkiss Lease is a former BLM Oil and Gas Lease (CAS 079816A) that is currently orphaned. The BLM prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to document the site specific analysis of potential impacts that could result from the final abandonment and restoration of the orphaned Hotchkiss oil and gas lease. The proposed project will repair the access road, clear the well pad, sample, remove and properly dispose of all fluids from the tanks and vessels, plug and abandon the well, remove all tanks, vessels, pipelines (located on well/facility pad), junk and debris, remove all visibly contaminated soil, and restore area to its natural function and conditions. The proposed project is located on BLM land in Section 25, T. 30 S., R. 20 E., MDBM within the Carrizo Plain National Monument in Kern County, CA. The EA is attached to, and incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Carrizo Plain National Monument Resource Management Plan, approved in April 2010; (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action and Alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This finding is based on my consideration of the Council of Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA:

**Context:** The proposed project location is located on the former Hotchkiss federal oil and gas lease (CAS 079816A), within the CPNM. The proposed action directly involves 0.5 acres of BLM-administered public lands. The purpose of this project is to conduct final abandonment and restoration of this oil and gas lease and return the area to its natural function and conditions. These actions do not have state-wide importance.

The proposed activity is a site-specific action with minor localized effects on air quality, soil disturbance, and special status plant and animal species in the immediate area. The EA details the effects of the action alternatives. None of the effects identified, including cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the Resource Management Plan.

**Intensity:** The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27. The discussions below apply to all project elements contained within the EA:

**1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.** Potential impacts include soil disturbance and temporary dust due to: construction activities, well work activities, and associated vehicle traffic. However, none of these impacts would be significant at the local scale or cumulatively because of the small scale of the project and design features that would reduce soil disturbance and dust impacts to immeasurable levels.

**2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** The Proposed Action would have the effect of reducing potentially adverse conditions for public health and safety by removing the open top vessels containing oil and other fluids, removing contaminated soil and plugging the well that is leaking natural gas into the air, polluting the air and creating a fire risk.

**3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** This project is located within the Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM) which is also part of the National Landscape Conservation System. The Proposed Action conforms with the CPNM RMP as it restores degraded and disturbed areas to native habitat for the objects of the monument proclamation. No park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas would be adversely affected by the proposed development. The project area has been surveyed and analyzed for biological, historical, and cultural resources. The project will not significantly affect biological, historical, or cultural resources.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** It is unlikely that any portion of the analyzed action would be controversial. The proposed action was posted for a 15 day public comment period. No comments were received during the comment period. Similar actions are commonplace in the area and draw little controversy.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The proposed project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar projects in similar areas and, have found effects to be reasonably predictable. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The proposed project does not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The project is consistent with the actions and impacts anticipated in the Carrizo Plain National Monument RMP. No cumulative effects have been identified. A complete disclosure of the effects of the proposed action and no action alternative is contained in the EA.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or**

**destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The proposed project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed project will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The proposed action is not expected to have impacts to listed species (California condor, San Joaquin kit fox, giant kangaroo rat, and blunt-nosed leopard lizard). Measures from the 2010 Biological Opinion for the CPNM RMP have been incorporated into the design features of the Proposed Action that will minimize or avoid impacts to these species. There is no designated critical habitat in the project area.

**10. Whether the action threatens to violate; Federal, State, or local law or requirements for the protection of the environment.** This action would not violate federal, state, or local laws or requirements. The proposed action is fully consistent with the 2010 Carrizo Plain National Monument Resource Management Plan. The EA is in full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and is consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Lead Date

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Officer Date